

## Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 195239 TOSEC 090012

FOL SENT ACTION TO SECSTATE INFO ISLAMABAD KATHMANDU NEW DELHI  
CALCUTTA CINCPAC AUG 16, 1975 FROM DACCA

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3964

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, BG, US, IN, UR, CH, XD

SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY COMMENT ON THE COUP IN BANGLADESH

1. THE EVENTS OF THE FIRST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS GIVE PROMISE  
THAT THE COUP WHICH BEGAN AT 0515 LOCAL TIME ON AUGUST 15  
WILL NOT BE CHALLENGED. THE OATHS OF FEALTY TO THE NEW  
GOVERNMENT SWORN BY THE SERVICE CHIEFS, THE HEADS OF THE  
PARAMILITARY BANGLADESH RIFLES AND RAKKHI BAHINI AND  
THE HEAD OF THE POLICE BRING ALL ARMED ELEMENTS INTO  
SUPPORT OF THE NEW REGIME. THE PUBLIC HAS DISPLAYED NO  
PARTICULAR JUBILATION AT THE FALL OF MUJIB BUT RATHER A  
CALM ACCEPTANCE, AND PERHAPS SOME SENSE OF RELIEF. THE  
RELATIVE EASE WITH WHICH POWER HAS BEEN TRANSFERRED  
SUGGESTS ABOVE ALL THE DEGREE TO WHICH MUJIB AND THE  
BANGALEES HAD BECOME ALIENATED FROM ONE ANOTHER, THE  
BANGALEES FROM MUJIB BECAUSE OF HIS FAILURE TO MEET THEIR  
ASPIRATIONS AND HIS APPARENT DESIRE TO HOLD POWER LARGELY  
FOR PERSONAL AGRANDIZEMENT AND DYNASTIC REASONS, AND MUJIB  
FROM THE BANGLAEEES AS HE GREW MORE ISOLATED FROM OBJECTIVE  
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COUNSELS AND BEGAN TO SUFFER THE CLASSIC PARANOIA OF THE

DESPOT. THE QUICKENING TEMPO OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S EFFORTS SINCE EARLY JUNE TO INSURE HIS STRANGLEHOLD ON POWER, TOGETHER WITH THE GROWING INFLUENCE OF HIS NEPHEW SHEIKH MONI, DOUBTLESS MADE THE COUP PLOTTERS CONCLUDE THAT NO FURTHER DELAYS IN TAKING ACTION WAS POSSIBLE. THAT INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY WAS CHOSEN MAY HAVE BEEN MERELY INCIDENTAL, BUT WE NOTE THE COINCIDENCE.

2. IT IS TOO EARLY TO OFFER ANY SURE OPINIONS ON THE DIRECTION OF EVENTS. THE NEW CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT UNDER KHONDAKAR MUSHTAQUE AHMED SEEMS LITTLE LIKELY TO AROUSE ANY SENSE OF ENTHUSIASM. ALTHOUGH PURGED--BY DEATH OR EXCLUSION--OF THOSE WHO WERE CLOSEST TO SHEIKH MUJIB, IT IS STILL A COLLECTION OF OVERLY FAMILIAR FIGURES WHO ARE IDENTIFIED WITH THE POOR ADMINISTRATION OF POST-LIBERATION BANGLADESH. CLEARLY, ITS COMPOSITION IS INTENDED TO SUGGEST THAT BANGLADESH UNDER MUSHTAQUE WILL OFFER CONTINUITY, BUT ALSO THAT THERE WILL BE GREATER MODERATION. MUSHTAQUE'S RADIO ADDRESS LATE ON AUGUST 15 (DACC 3955) SUPPORTS THIS VIEW, CONDEMNING AS IT DOES THE DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES OF SHEIKH MUJIB'S RULE BUT CLEARLY SUGGESTING THAT INsofar AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARE CONCERNED, BUSINESS WILL BE MUCH AS USUAL. THERE IS ALREADY SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL WANT TO STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH THE MUSLIM WORLD, INCLUDING PAKISTAN. AT THE SAME TIME, MUSHTAQUE'S WELL-KNOWN ANTIPATHY TO INDIA NOTWITHSTANDING, THE NEW REGIME WILL NOT WANT TO AROUSE UNDUE SUSPICIONS ON THE PART OF INDIA, CLEARLY COGNIZANT OF THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING AN ADEQUATE MEASURE OF GOODWILL ON THE PART OF ITS IMPOSING NEIGHBOR. (PERHAPS ONE REASON FOR THE COMPOSITION OF THE CABINET, WITH ITS EXCLUSIVE RELIANCE ON OLD FACES, IS A HOPE TO DEMONSTRATE TO INDIA ITS BASIC CONTINUITY.) INsofar AS THE MAJOR POWERS ARE CONCERNED, MUSHTAQUE HAS STATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S DESIRE TO ESTABLISH "CLOSER AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE BIG POWERS LIKE THE UNITED STATES, THE SOVIET UNION AND CHINA." THIS WOULD SEEM TO MEAN MORE BALANCE IN ITS RELATIONS, AND THUS SOME DIMINUTION IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE SOVIET UNION.

3. THE EVIDENCE SO FAR SUGGESTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT  
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OUR OWN RELATIONS WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT COULD TURN OUT TO BE ON AN EVEN MORE CORDIAL BASIS THAN THEY WERE UNDER MUJIB. THE NEW PRESIDENT HAS IN THE PAST BEEN STRIKINGLY OVERT IN SUGGESTING HIS "PRO-AMERICAN" ATTITUDE; MOREOVER, THE FIGURES IN THE OLD REGIME WHO WERE KNOWN FOR THEIR LEFTIST AND ANTI-AMERICAN VIEWS (SHEIKH MONI AND SAMAD, EXAMPLE) ARE NOW GONE. THE POSSIBILITY IS ALSO STRONG THAT THEY WILL LOOK TO US FOR EVEN LARGER AMOUNTS OF AID--

MUSHTAQUE HAS ARGUED WITH US BEFORE THAT WE ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN TRULY HELP BANGLADESH--SO THAT OUR PROBLEM MAY WELL PROVE TO BE ONE OF TEMPERING THE NEW REGIME'S EXPECTATIONS OF US.

4. WE CANNOT PRESENTLY JUDGE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MUSHTAQUE'S GOVERNMENT AND THE MILITARY. WE NOTE WITH INTEREST THAT EVERY OFFICIAL STATEMENT STRESSES THE ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN THE TAKEOVER. WE ARE TOLD THAT THEY MILITARY ARE AT PRESENT ENGAGED IN PREPARING MARTIAL LAW ORDERS WHICH WOULD, IF THE PAKISTANI PATTERN IS FOLLOWED, SERVE AS BASIS LAW OF THE COUNTRY. WHETHER THIS MEANS A GROWTH OF TENSION BETWEEN THE CIVILIANS AND THE MILITARY WE CANNOT YET SAY, BUT WE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT THAT ONE OF THE FIRST STATEMENTS BY MUSHTAQUE WOULD HAVE BEEN A PROMISE OF A NEW, MORE LIBERAL CONSTITUTION THAN THAT IMPOSED LAST JANUARY BY MUJIB. THE CIVILIANS PROBABLY HAVE A MOMENTARY ADVANTAGE IN LIGHT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE; MOREOVER, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MILITARY'S SUCCESSFUL OUSTER OF MUJIB, WE ARE LEFT WITH THE IMPRESSION THAT THE COUP PLANNERS PREPARED FOR LITTLE BEYOND THE EVENT ITSELF. HOWEVER, THE MILITARY--AND BY THIS WE MEAN THE YOUNGER OFFICERS WHO PLANNED AND LED COUP--DID WORK THE OVERTHROW OF SHEIKH MUJIB, AND WE SUSPECT THAT, HAVING TASTED BLOOD, THEY WILL WANT AT THE VERY LEAST TO EXERCISE SOME MEASURE OF INFLUENCE OVER THE COURSE OF EVENTS. WE HAVE NO REASON TO LOOK FOR BANGALEE QUADDAFIS AMONG THE COUP PLANNERS; RATHER, AS MEMBERS OF THE OLD, SERVICE-ORIENTED MIDDLE CLASS WHICH WAS THREATENED BY SHEIKH MUJIB, THEY MAY PROVE A MORE MODERATE FORCE THAN HAS BEEN SEEN IN EAST BENGAL SINCE PAKISTANI PERIOD.

5. ONE POINT TO BE EMPHASIZED IS THAT, WHILE THE OVERTHROW  
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OF SHEIKH MUJIB WAS SUCCESSFUL, IF BLOODLY, A GREAT DEAL REMAINS TO BE DONE. MUSHTAQUE'S SPEECH IS SIGNIFICANT LARGELY FOR ITS GENERALITIES AND ITS ECHOES OF EARLIER AWAMI LEAGUE RHETORIC, BUT CONCRETE ACTIONS HAVE SO FAR BEEN FEW. WE ARE NOT SURPRISED THAT THE DEGREE OF DIRECTION DISPLAYED SO FAR IS LIMITED FOR WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO THINK THAT THOSE PRIVY TO THE PLANNING OF THE COUP WERE SMALL IN NUMBER AND THUS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PREPARING ANY ELABORATE PLANS FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF BANGLADESH WAS VERY SMALL. HOWEVER, UNLESS EARLY STEPS ARE TAKEN TO DEMONSTRATE VIGOR AND WILL, THE ADVANTAGE NOW HELD BY THE NEW REGIME WILL BEGIN TO DIMINISH, AND WE MAY CONFRONT AN UNSETTLED--AND UNSETTLING--SITUATION AS CONTENDERS FOR POWER EMERGE. NO ONE NOW ON THE BANGLAEE POLITIICAL STAGE HAS KIND OF COMMANDING PERSONALITY WHICH SUSTAINED SHEIKH

MUJIB FOR SO LONG. THE THE CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT FALTERS, WE  
MAY FIND THE MILITARY CONCLUDING THAT IS MUST AGAIN  
SAVE THE NATION.  
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